

## *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* POETRY ANALYSIS AND CONNECTIONS

Complete each of the following steps in the analysis and connection to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, focusing on at least three of the given poems which relate to the characters and/or themes in the novel. You must first complete the Poetry Analysis steps, in written form, for **one** of the poems you choose, and then you must also complete the written Connections portion using the three poems you feel best connect to the characters and/or themes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You may do the "Poetry Analysis" in partners, but **each student** must complete the "Poetry Connections" portion on their own. **Both parts must be handed in.** If a poem is followed by "Not for analysis" you may use it only in the Connections portion.

**PART I. POETRY ANALYSIS:** (*You may work with a partner on this portion only, if you choose, but each of you must hand in a copy of the analysis along with the second portion of the assignment.*)

1. **Title (1):** Ponder the title before reading the poem; predict what the poem may be "about."
2. **Paraphrase (5):** Translate the poem into your own words. Focus on one syntactical unit at a time, not necessarily on one line at a time. Or write two or three sentences for each stanza of the poem.
3. **Connotation (5):** Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal. What do the key words mean beyond the obvious? What are the implications, the hints, the suggestions of these particular word choices?
4. **Literary Devices (5):** List and explain any and all poetic devices, focusing on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both, of a poem. (What is important is not that you can identify poetic devices so much as that you can explain how the devices enhance meaning and effect.) Especially note anything that is repeated, either individual words or complete phrases. Anything said more than once may be crucial to interpretation.
5. **Tone and Mood (2):** Observe both the speaker's and the poet's attitude (tone). Diction, images, and details suggest the speaker's attitude and contribute to understanding.
6. **Shifts (5):** Trace the changing feelings of the speaker from the beginning to end, paying particular attention to the conclusion. To discover shifts, watch for the following: *key words*: but, yet, however, although; *punctuation*: dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis; *stanza and/or line divisions*: change in line or stanza length or both; *irony*: sometimes irony hides shifts; effect of structure on meaning, how the poem is "built"; changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning; *changes in diction*: slang to formal language, for instance, or positive connotation to negative; *the crux*, the one crucial part of the work that stands out, perhaps presenting the complete idea all by itself.
7. **Title (2):** Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level.
8. **Theme (5):** After analyzing the poem, identify the theme: the human experience, motivation, or condition suggested by the poem. Write a complete sentence identifying the idea the poet or speaker (narrator) is conveying through the poem. Explain briefly how this theme is conveyed through the poem.

( / 30 marks)

**PART II. POETRY CONNECTIONS:** (*Each student must complete and hand in this portion individually.*)

After you have chosen your poems, you must write at least three paragraphs connecting the poems you chose to the characters and/or themes from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. You must choose three poems which you feel connect to either the central characters or the central themes present in the novel, of which one may be the poem used for Part I. For each poem, write a paragraph analyzing the poem and explaining specifically how it connects to either a key character or a theme from the novel. The following steps should be used as a guideline:

1. Start with a thesis statement which briefly states the characters and theme(s) you will discuss and the poems you've chosen to represent each. Introduce the first poem you've chosen and the character or theme you are connecting it to, and give a detailed explanation of how the poem represents that character or theme. **Use specific examples (ie: quotes) from the poem to reinforce your connections.**
2. Introduce the second poem you've chosen and the character or theme you are connecting it to, and give a detailed explanation of how the poem represents that character or theme. **Use specific examples (ie: quotes) from the poem to reinforce your connections.**
3. Introduce the third poem you've chosen and the character or theme you are connecting it to, and give a detailed explanation of how the poem represents that character or theme. **Use specific examples (ie: quotes) from the poem to reinforce your connections.** Briefly conclude by restating your thesis and leaving the reader with something to think about.

*\*Note – if a poem says Not for Analysis it may not be used for the Analysis portion of the assignment, but you may use it in the Connections portion of the assignment.*

**TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD POETRY CONNECTIONS – POEM SELECTIONS:**

**The Key of the Kingdom** by Ed Reed

When we were children  
We possessed the key to a kingdom  
Such as this world has yet to see.  
Wherever we went;  
By lakes,  
Pools  
And streams,  
In woods,  
Meadows,  
And fields,  
There was a world beyond belief  
In which anything could be something else.  
A world  
Whose every corner  
Would yield some new adventure or surprise.  
A world  
In which we ruled  
And was ours alone.

Only we children had the key,  
The key of the kingdom.

A world inhabited by goblins, ghosts and ghouls,  
Dragons, trolls witches, sorcerers,  
Knights,  
Fair damsels, wicked kings  
And green-skinned, three-eyed floops.  
A world of enchanted geography –  
Magic Forests,  
Glass mountains  
And fountains of youth.

In this world  
We held our castles  
Made of T.V. boxes  
Against marauding bands of Vikings  
Armed with swords made of lattice  
And shields taken from the tops of garbage cans.  
We sailed with Columbus  
Across the unchartered waters of a lily pond.  
We descended  
With Captain Nemo  
To 20,000 leagues beneath the bathwater.  
We went west with the pioneers  
By coaster wagon,  
And to the East with Marco Polo  
By tricycle.  
We defied savage Indians  
From the next block  
And returned alive  
In time for an afternoon nap.  
We hunted fierce man-eating squirrels.  
We dared damnation

By taking the trainer wheels  
Off our first bicycle.  
We did a zillion billion other brave.  
Courageous.  
Bold.  
Fun things.

Now that we are older.  
Wiser  
And more mature  
This kingdom no longer has our allegiance.  
We have lost the key  
And it has perished with the rust of misuse  
And neglect.

Age is the grave yard  
Of all our youthful hopes.  
Dreams  
And experiences.

**Lies** by Yevgeny Yevtushenko (*Not for analysis.*)

Telling lies to the young is wrong.  
Proving to them that lies are true is wrong.  
Telling them that God's in his heaven  
and all's well with the world is wrong.  
The young know what you mean. The young are people.  
Tell them the difficulties can't be counted,  
and let them see not only what will be  
but see with clarity these present times.  
Say obstacles exist they must encounter,  
sorrow happens, hardship happens.  
The hell with it. Who never knew  
the price of happiness will not be happy.  
Forgive no error you recognize,  
it will repeat itself, increase,  
and afterwards our pupils  
will not forgive in us what we forgave.

*continued...*

**I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings** by *Maya Angelou*

A free bird leaps on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream till the current ends  
and dips his wing in the orange sun's rays  
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and his feet are  
tied so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill  
of things unknown but longed for still  
and his tune is heard on the distant hill  
for the caged bird sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the  
sighing trees and the fat worms  
waiting on a dawn-bright lawn and  
he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the  
grave of dreams his shadow shouts  
on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are  
tied so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill  
of things unknown but longed for still  
and his tune is heard on the distant hill  
for the caged bird sings of freedom.

**Reach out and Touch** by *Maxine Tynes*

baby girl, baby boy behind me on the bus  
reach out  
and touch the curly electric of my hair  
your fingers dipped in the  
brown skin of my neck  
to see if it comes off  
your mama  
slapping hands away  
hush-up of your questions  
and wondering out loud why it doesn't come off.  
I turn and smile for you,  
but you're already lost  
in the silence and the fear that motherlove wraps you in.  
I should have sat beside you  
snugged up my big warm self up close  
held you while your mama juggled parcels,  
then you would know it's ok.

**Trees** by *Angelina W. Grimke*

God made them very beautiful, the trees:  
He spoke and gnarled of bole or silken sleek  
They grew; majestic bowed or very meek;  
Huge-bodied, slim; sedate and full of glees.  
And He had pleasure deep in all of these.  
And to them soft and little tongues to speak  
Of Him to us, He gave wherefore they seek  
From dawn to dawn to bring unto our knees.  
Yet here amid the wistful sounds of leaves,  
A black-hued grewsome something swings and  
swings;  
Laughter it knew and joy in little things  
Till man's hate ended all. -And so man weaves.  
And God, how slow, how very slow weaves He-  
Was Christ Himself not nailed to a tree?

**Children's Rhymes** by *Langston Hughes*

By what sends  
the white kids  
I ain't sent:  
I know I can't  
be President.

What don't bug *(Not for analysis.)*  
them white kids  
sure bugs me:  
We know everybody  
ain't free.  
Lies written down  
for white folks  
ain't for us a-tall:  
Liberty And Justice--  
Huh!--For All?

**I Sit and Look Out** by *Walt Whitman*

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and  
upon all oppressions and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish  
with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,  
I see in low life the mother misused by her children,  
dying, neglected, gaunt, desperate,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the  
treacherous seducer of young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love  
attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see  
martyrs and prisoners,  
I observe a famine at sea, I observe sailors casting lots  
who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,  
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant  
persons upon labourers, the poor, and upon Negroes,  
and the like;  
All these – all the meanness and agony without end I  
sitting look out upon,  
See, hear, and am silent.

**Squirrels** by *Vincent McNeil*

I remember. I was seven.  
And so much younger than I  
should have been, all things  
considered.  
It was warm and  
I was Sir Richard Francis Burton,  
fever ridden,  
searching for the mouth of the  
Nile.

There were two of them, lying  
side by side, under a sucker Maple  
at the north end of  
the Transmission Shop where  
Kalie's Dad worked. At sight  
of them, the jungle ripped  
apart and threaded itself between the  
bricks. (Where it could wait for  
another imagination to knit  
the strands back into adventure.)

God-like  
and Child-like  
I tucked them carefully  
into my jacket then took them home  
for Mother to work  
Her Magic. Being unaware of this however  
and not nearly strong enough  
for seven year old boys  
and dead squirrels . . . she left them  
Dead.  
And my flight back to the Nile  
began in earnest.

**I Know** by *Carolyn Mamchur*

I know when my dad's  
been sneaking a smoke  
in the toolshed:  
sweet pipe tobacco smells  
stay in his hair  
on his rough tweed jacket

I know when my dad's  
waking up before the alarm  
goes off at seven a.m.:  
his snoring stops  
and starts, he breathes  
out low and long and lazy.

I know when my dad's  
been working too hard  
under somebody else's deadline:  
all the Mennen in the world  
doesn't keep that  
scared sour smell away.

I know when my dad's  
been eating oranges  
in front of the T.V.:  
the juice jumps to his chin,  
clings to his t-shirt  
as he slices through the peel.

I know when he's been  
riding in the park  
through the hyacinths  
by the sea wall  
past the steel mill.  
He brings the stories  
in his hair  
on his clothes  
before he tells me.  
And he always  
tells me.

I know too,  
when he's been crying,  
remembering  
the day he was  
cooking burgers  
and the barbeque  
exploded  
in my face.

After that  
I learned to smell.  
and listen.

It ain't so bad.

**The Angry Soup of Racism** by Ronald Stroman

ain't it a shame  
when hate lynches  
a 14 year old Colored boy  
in 1955 Mississippi  
and blows away the dreams of  
four innocent little Negro girls  
in 1963 Birmingham, Alabama

yeah  
bus that to your segregated thoughts  
as I 'interracially' walk you  
through Little Rock, Arkansas  
with Daisy Bates & nine Black Children  
to march along side the National Guard  
on their way to a lily white school  
as the message of this  
un-segregates & un-tangles  
the history of hate  
attackin' Negroes in 1957  
whose only desire was to be educated  
and schooled too

racism & hate  
doesn't try to guide  
the white citizen council back  
to their good senses  
'cause racism  
don't care 'bout nobody  
being Jew or Colored  
when it needs to  
fire-bomb  
Negro churches with Negroes in them  
or feels the need to hang someone  
from a tree out of existence  
racism even devours... its own kkkklan  
as the innocent  
pay the ultimate price

racism doesn't care  
if your church is the 16th Street Baptist  
and 14 yr. old Addie Mae Collins  
is one of the four black Alabama children  
killed in attendance  
racism ain't concerned about  
you being Caucasian either  
or your last name being  
Jewish  
White  
Black  
Brown  
Till  
Schwerner  
Evers  
Liuzzo  
Mandela

Martin or Rodney King  
and so many other names  
that we'll never know of  
that racism wounded or buried six feet  
under hate

racism doesn't care about  
what kinda NAACP dream  
you're having  
or concerned about your last name  
being 'Parks' in 1955  
when it attempts to guide you back  
to the 'Colored' section of the bus  
where you know your  
civil-rights will be denied  
every time you allow  
'segregation & discrimination'  
to collect its fare

racism and its hateful followers  
have no regard at all  
for one's race/religion  
or sexual persuasion

especially when racism peers  
into its discriminating mirror  
century after century  
time after time  
day after day  
and tells itself in 2006  
'it's better than you'  
because you're 'cultured' different  
from them'

yeah  
racism stirs an 'ugly pot' of soup  
that no one should ever have to taste.

*continued...*

**Whitey on the Moon** by Gil Scot-Heron

A rat done bit my sister Nell.  
(with Whitey on the moon)  
Her face and arms began to swell.  
(and Whitey's on the moon)  
I can't pay no doctor bill.  
(but Whitey's on the moon)  
Ten years from now I'll be payin' still.  
(while Whitey's on the moon)  
The man jus' upped my rent las' night.  
( 'cause Whitey's on the moon)  
No hot water, no toilets, no lights.  
(but Whitey's on the moon)  
I wonder why he's uppi' me?  
( 'cause Whitey's on the moon?)  
I wuz already payin' 'im fifty a week.  
(with Whitey on the moon)  
Taxes takin' my whole damn check,  
Junkies makin' me a nervous wreck,  
The price of food is goin' up,  
An' as if all that shit wuzn't enough:  
A rat done bit my sister Nell.  
(with Whitey on the moon)  
Her face an' arm began to swell.  
(but Whitey's on the moon)  
Was all that money I made las' year  
(for Whitey on the moon?)  
How come there ain't no money here?  
(Hmm! Whitey's on the moon)  
Y'know I jus' 'bout had my fill  
(of Whitey on the moon)  
I think I'll sen' these doctor bills,  
Airmail special  
(to Whitey on the moon)

**Workshop on Racism** by Toi Derricotte

Her mother is crying  
because Briana came home from school screaming in  
agony.  
Two girls in her class are named Briana  
and the children distinguish them  
by calling her "The Black Briana," taunting her.  
she screams at her mother, "I don't want to be  
"The Black Briana!"  
her mother weeps, helplessly. "What can I do?  
I give her dolls, read her  
black history. How can I protect her?"  
Already at five the children understand,  
"black" is not a color, it is a  
blazing skin.  
(*Not for analysis.*)

**The Klan** by Gil Scot-Heron

Countryside was cold and still  
There were three crosses on the hill  
Each one wore a burning hood  
To hide its rotten core of wood  
And I say father, father I hear an iron sound  
Hoof beats on the frozen ground  
And downhill the riders came  
Lord it was a cryin' shame  
To see the blood upon their whips  
To hear the snarlin' from their lips  
And I cried mother, mother I feel a stabbing pain  
Blood runs down like summer's rain  
And each one wore a mask of white  
To hide his cruel face from sight  
And each one sucked a hungry breath  
Out of the empty lungs of death  
And I say sister, sister, I need you to take my hand  
It's always lonely when it's time to stand  
He who rides with the Klan  
Is a devil and not a man  
For underneath his white disguise  
I have looked into his eyes  
And I say brother, brother, stand by me  
It's not so easy to be free  
Father, mother, sister, brother, stand by me  
It's not so easy to be free  
It's not so easy to be free  
It's not so easy to be free  
Nobody ever said it would be easy  
Nobody ever said it would be easy  
It's not so easy, no it's not so easy

**Memory** (*Not for analysis.*)

Ask me to tell how it feels  
remembering your mother's face  
turned to water under the white  
words of the man at the shoe store.

Ask me,  
though she tells it better than I do,  
not because of her charm  
but because it never happened

She says,  
no bully salesman swaggering,  
no rage, no shame, none of it  
ever happened.

I only remember buying you  
your first grown up shoes  
she smiles.

Ask me how it feels.

**In the Matter of Two Men** by James D. Corrothers

One does such work as one will not,  
And well each knows the right;  
Though the white storm howls, or the sun is hot,  
The black must serve the white.  
And it's, oh, for the white man's softening flesh,  
While the black man's muscles grow!  
Well I know which grows the mightier,  
I know; full well I know.

The white man seeks the soft, fat place,  
And he moves and he works by rule.  
Ingenious grows the humbler race  
In Oppression's prodding school.  
And it's, oh, for a white man gone to seed,  
While the Negro struggles so!  
And I know which race develops most,  
I know; yes, well I know.

The white man rides in a palace car,  
And the Negro rides "Jim Crow."  
To damn the other with bolt and bar,  
One creepeth so low; so low!  
And it's, oh, for a master's nose in the mire,  
While the humbled hearts o'erflow!  
Well I know whose soul grows big at this,  
And whose grows small; *I know!*

The white man leases out his land,  
And the Negro tills the same.  
One works; one loaf and takes command;  
But I know who wins the game!  
And it's, oh, for the white man's shrinking soil,  
As the black's rich acres grow!  
Well I know how the signs point out at last,  
I know; ah, well I know!

The white man votes for his color's sake,  
While the black, for his is barred;  
(Though "ignorance" is the charge they make),  
But the black man studies hard.  
And it's, oh, for the white man's sad neglect,  
For the power of his light let go!  
So, I know which man must win at last,  
I know! Ah, Friend, I know!

**Ballad of Birmingham** (*Not for analysis.*)

(*On the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963*)

"Mother dear, may I go downtown  
Instead of out to play,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
In a Freedom March today?"

"No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For the dogs are fierce and wild,  
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails  
Aren't good for a little child."

"But, mother, I won't be alone.  
Other children will go with me,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
To make our country free."

"No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For I fear those guns will fire.  
But you may go to church instead  
And sing in the children's choir."

She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,  
And bathed rose petal sweet,  
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,  
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know that her child  
Was in the sacred place,  
But that smile was the last smile  
To come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,  
Her eyes grew wet and wild.  
She raced through the streets of Birmingham  
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,  
Then lifted out a shoe.  
"O, here's the shoe my baby wore,  
But, baby, where are you?"

**The Weakness** by Toi Derricotte

That time my grandmother dragged me  
through the perfume aisles at Saks, she held me up  
by my arm, hissing, "Stand up,"  
through clenched teeth, her eyes  
bright as a dog's  
cornered in the light.  
She said it over and over,  
as if she were Jesus,  
and I were dead. She had been  
solid as a tree,  
a fur around her neck, a  
light-skinned matron whose car was parked, who walked  
on swirling  
marble and passed through  
brass openings--in 1945  
there was not even a black  
elevator operator at Saks.  
The saleswoman had brought velvet  
leggings to lace me in, and cooed,  
as if in service of all grandmothers.  
My grandmother had smiled, but not  
hungrily, not like my mother  
who hated them, but wanted to please,  
and they had smiled back, as if  
they were wearing wooden collars.  
When my legs gave out, my grandmother  
dragged me up and held me like God  
holds saints by the  
roots of the hair. I begged her  
to believe I couldn't help it.  
Stumbling, her face white  
with sweat, she pushed me through the crowd, rushing  
away from those eyes  
that saw through  
her clothes, under  
her skin, all the way down  
to the transparent  
genes confessing.

**Cross** Langston Hughes (Not for analysis.)

My old man's a white old man  
And my old mother's black.  
If ever I cursed my white old man  
I take my curses back.  
If ever I cursed my black old mother  
And wished she were in hell,

I'm sorry for that evil wish  
And now I wish her well  
My old man died in a fine big house.  
My ma died in a shack.  
I wonder where I'm going to die,  
Being neither white nor black?

**Brother** by Toi Derricotte

Jay's mother is brown, mine is white-  
looking, as I am, as is our father.  
he says sometimes when he'd go  
to fill the vending machines  
with our father, the white bartenders  
would say, "Is that your helper?"  
my father would say, "No, he's my  
son." Jay says you can always tell  
the person changes by something  
in the eyes, it may be small -  
the eyes open wider or the brow  
creases down. He says that once,  
our father sent him to get something  
from the truck. When he came back,  
the bartender had set him up  
with a soda, "Have some pop,"  
he said in a friendly way. Another time,  
when I was doing a reading in New Jersey,  
Jay was with me. "A yuppie place,"  
he remembers. After the applause  
I thanked them and said, "I'd like to  
introduce my brother." When he stood  
up, people were still looking around  
for somebody, looking  
right through him. Finally, when they realized  
he was *it*, he heard a woman say, "Oh no!"  
as if she had been hit in the solar plexus.  
maybe that's why he didn't marry  
somebody like us. He married a girl  
black as God - and brags to family, strangers,  
to *anyone* about that  
blackness - so easily recognized, his.

**For Black Women Who Are Afraid** by Toi Derricotte

A black woman comes up to me at break in the writing  
workshop and reads me her poem, but she says she  
can't read it out loud because  
there's a woman in a car on her way  
to work and her hair is blowing in the breeze  
and, since her hair is blowing, the woman must be  
white, and she shouldn't write about a white woman  
whose hair is blowing, because  
maybe the black poets will think she wants to be  
that woman and be mad at her and say she hates herself,  
and maybe they won't let her explain  
that she grew up in a white neighborhood  
and it's not her fault, it's just what she sees.  
But she has to be so careful. I tell her to write  
the poem about being afraid to write,  
and we stand for a long time like that,  
respecting each other's silence.  
(Not for analysis.)

**Nikki-Rosa** *Author Unknown*

Childhood remembrances are  
always a drag if you're Black  
you always remember things like  
living in Woodlawn with no inside toilet  
and if you become famous or something

They never talk about how happy  
you were to have your mother  
all to yourself and how good the  
water felt when you got your bath  
from one of those

Big tubs that folk in Chicago barbeque  
in and somehow when you talk about home  
it never gets across how much you  
understood their feelings as the  
whole family attended meetings

About Hollydale and even though you  
remember your biographers never  
understand your father's pain as he  
sells his stock and another  
dream goes

And though you're poor it isn't  
poverty that concerns you and  
though they fought a lot  
it isn't your father's drinking that  
makes any difference but only that

Everybody is together and you  
and your sister have happy birthdays  
and very good Christmases and I  
really hope no white person ever has  
cause to write about me  
because they never understand

Black love is Black wealth and they'll  
probably talk about my hard childhood  
and never understand that  
all the while I was quite happy

**Flag Salute** *by Esther Popel*

*"I pledge allegiance to the flag"--*

They dragged him naked  
Through the muddy streets,  
A feeble-minded black boy!  
And the charge? Supposed assault  
Upon an aged woman!

*"Of the United States of America"--*

One mile they dragged him  
Like a sack of meal,  
A rope around his neck,  
A bloody ear

Left dangling by the patriotic hand  
Of Nordic youth. (A boy of seventeen!)

*"And to the Republic for which it stands"--*

And then they hanged his body to a tree,  
Below the window of the county judge  
Whose pleadings for that battered human flesh  
Were stifled by the brutish, raucous howls  
Of men, and boys, and women with their babes,  
Brought out to see the bloody spectacle  
Of murder in the style of '33.

(Three thousand strong, they were!)

*"One Nation, Indivisible"--*

To make the tale complete

They built a fire--

What matters that the stuff they burned

Was flesh--and bone--and hair--

And reeking gasoline?

*"With Liberty--and Justice"--*

They cut the rope in bits

And passed them out,

For souvenirs, among the men and boys.

The teeth no doubt, on golden chains

Will hang

About the favored necks of sweethearts, wives,

And daughters, mothers, sisters, babies, too.

*"For ALL!"*

**The Sick Deer** by Joan Finnigan

Four men in the Gatineau Hills,  
ski-ing along the dazzling trails of March,  
found a sick deer  
    lying helpless  
    in the snow.

The fallen animal raised its head  
and turned on them  
the gentle pleading pools of those eyes  
which only fail to move killers,

and it cried like something human,  
and tried to rise  
but fell back

the four skiers stood in a semi-circle  
as stricken as men

faced with a woman in tears  
and the first of them bent down  
and gathered the sick animal

into his arms and they began,  
by mutual consent,  
a long Samaritan journey  
back to civilization.

the deer was a yearling;  
it weighted forty-five pounds  
and they had to take turns  
carrying the burden of their humanity,  
down the steep hills,  
across the long trails.

flagging, stumbling, sweating,  
two of them remembering the weight of wounded buddies  
at Salerno and Dieppe,  
they made the long trek back over the miles  
with the sick deer in their arms,  
collecting a retinue of skiers  
as they came out of the wilderness  
into the areas  
crawling with human hill-flies.

at the first Aid outpost  
the crowds gathered around;  
the tow ran alone,  
a caesura in pleasure,  
and many eyes watched the Night Rider  
and the four committed men  
wrap the sick deer in blankets  
and strap him in a toboggan  
for the last stretch of the journey  
down to the road.

there was not enough all people joined together  
could do for that sick deer;  
many offered help;  
others kept their longings to themselves  
and one woman said  
in a voice that reeled through the hills,  
“Oh, isn’t it terrible,  
    it cries  
    just like a child.”

at the road they tucked the shivering animal  
into the back seat of one of their cars  
and drove with a real sense of emergency  
to a veterinarian in Hull  
who, without question of fee,  
used all his equipment and skill  
to treat the creature  
which died a few hours later  
    of a mysterious undiagnosed disease.

back in the hills,  
the tows resumed full speed,  
sucked into their clanging maws  
a whole long line after line  
of impatient humans  
and spewed them all out  
at the tops of hills  
never into the dusk done with the obsessive ones,  
swooshing forever down, down  
without the struggle of going up.

so engrossed were they,  
they did not see the child  
lying in the killing winds,  
in the snows of violent suns,  
stricken in seeds  
    and in bones.

Neither did anyone hear the child cry;

children don’t cry like deer.

### **The Bull-Frogs Got Theirs (as now I do)**

*by George Kenny*

As a boy, I would go out with my friends  
and spear bull-frogs.  
It didn't matter if each frog might someday  
be turned into a prince  
by some little girl's magic capable mind,  
nor did it matter if the bull-frogs  
had feelings to feel  
our jack-knife sharpened stakes  
through their hearts;  
as boys will do without caring  
for small animal life,  
my friends and I would launch our wooden  
spears, yelling  
like the warriors we imagined  
ourselves to be. . .

And as I'm older now, often I see people  
with word-spears cut me down.  
It doesn't matter if someday I might  
become a prince  
by the power of some woman's love  
nor does it matter if I have  
feelings to feel  
their verbal spears sharply  
through my heart;  
as people will act without caring  
about others,  
people, even now, spit their word-  
spears, sneering  
like the gods they imagine  
themselves to be.

### **Peer Group Prosecution** *by Debbie Ebeling*

It all starts here.

Your friends, or peer group,  
are your source of information.  
Your decisions are affected –  
what music, which clothing,  
what trends to adopt and  
who t' love and who t' hate.       *(Not for analysis.)*

Everything "races" by so fast.  
We forget what we did to Philmore Stetson.  
We "bugged" him  
About his English accent.

Or to Rhudi Horton.  
She's from India, and her clothes are  
"not right" in our eyes.  
Or how about last Saturday at  
the mall – Jhamia Jespersen.  
He's not "all" black or "all" white, so  
we called him an "Oreo."  
And we laughed.  
And five days later, we deny anything of the sort: "me?"  
We lie to ourselves, we lie to heal ourselves.  
And we've forgotten that we should  
have a reason to love  
and a reason to hate.

The reason to hate exists no longer,  
we just hate.  
For we have forgotten the values of  
the individual, and have turned.  
And now we just hate.

The comments and "light" humour  
hurt, and we forget this.  
We now just hate in a "fun way."  
And that is all we've learned.

We've forgotten that Together  
is Better whenever, wherever.  
Together's Better.  
And you thing; then you vow  
to yourself, silently, in disgrace;  
Never again.

**Dinner Guest: Me** by Langston Hughes

I know I am (Not for Analysis)

The Negro Problem  
Being wined and dined,  
Answering the usual questions  
That come to white mind  
Which seeks demurely  
To Probe in polite way  
The why and wherewithal  
Of darkness U.S.A.--  
Wondering how things got this way  
In current democratic night,  
Murmuring gently  
Over *fraises du bois*,  
"I'm so ashamed of being white."  
The lobster is delicious,  
The wine divine,  
And center of attention  
At the damask table, mine.  
To be a Problem on  
Park Avenue at eight  
Is not so bad.  
Solutions to the Problem,  
Of course, wait.

**Prayer Before Birth** by Louise MacNeice

"Even poisons praise thee." George Hebert

I am not yet born; O hear me  
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the  
club-footed ghouel come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.  
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,  
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,  
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me  
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to  
talk to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light  
in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me  
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words  
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me  
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,  
my life when they murder by means of my  
hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me  
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when  
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains  
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white  
waves call me to folly and the desert calls  
me to doom and the beggar refuses  
my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,  
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God  
Come near me.

I am not yet born; O fill me  
With strength against those who would fill me  
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,  
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with  
one face, a thing, and against all those  
who would dissipate my entirety, would  
blow me like thistledown hither and  
thither or hither and thither  
like water held in the  
hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.  
Otherwise kill me.